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UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL SURGICAL CONTROL SYSTEM
AND SWITCHING INTERFACE

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention generally relates to control systems. More particularly, the present invention relates to an interface that allows multiple surgical devices to be controlled from an input device, such as a foot pedal.

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2. DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

Many surgical procedures are performed with multiple instruments. For example, some laparoscopic
15 procedures are performed utilizing a robotic arm system produced by Computer Motion, Inc. of Goleta, California to hold and move an endoscope. The surgeon may also use a laser to cut tissue and an electrocautery device to cauterize the tissue. Each instrument has a unique
20 control panel or foot pedal to operate the device. The surgeon must therefore depress one foot pedal to move the robotic arm and endoscope, depress a different foot pedal to actuate the electrocautery device, and manipulate yet another input device to energize the

laser. Operating multiple input devices may distract the surgeon, thereby reducing the efficiency and safety of performing the procedure. It would therefore be desirable to provide an interface that would allow the surgeon to select and control multiple surgical devices from a single input device. Additionally, it is also desirable to provide an interface that would allow the surgeon to mutually exclusively select and control multiple surgical devices from an input device.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an interface for coupling an input device to a first surgical apparatus and a second surgical apparatus, the interface

5 comprising:

(a) a first input channel coupled to the input device;

(b) a first output channel coupled to the first surgical apparatus;

10 (c) a second output channel coupled to the second surgical apparatus;

(d) a select channel configured to switch said first input channel between said first output channel and said second output channel.

15 The interface allows a surgeon to operate multiple surgical devices from a single input device. The input device may be a foot pedal that provides output signals to actuate a number of different surgical devices. The surgical devices may include a robotic arm system, a
20 laser, an electrocautery device, or an operating table. The interface has an input channel that is coupled to the input device and a plurality of output channels that are coupled to the surgical devices. The interface also has a select channel which can receive

input commands and correspondingly switch the input channel between one of the output channels. The select channel may be coupled to a speech interface that allows the surgeon to select one of the surgical
5 devices with a voice command. The surgeon can then operate a specific device after providing an input or switching command which switches the input channel to the desired output channel and thereby connects the input device with the desired surgical device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The objects and advantages of the present invention will be readily apparent to those ordinarily skilled in the art after reviewing the following detailed description and accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is a schematic of a control system and interface in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to drawings more particularly by reference numbers, Figure 1 shows a surgical system 10 in accordance with the present invention. The system 10 allows a surgeon to operate a number of different surgical devices 12, 14, 16 and 18 from a single input device 20. Providing a single input device reduces the complexity of operating the various devices and improves the efficiency of a surgical procedure performed by a surgeon.

Surgical device 12 may be a robotic arm which can hold and move a surgical instrument. The arm 12 may be a device such as that sold by Computer Motion, Inc. of Goleta, California under the trademark AESOP. The arm 12 is commonly used to hold and move an endoscope within a patient. The system of the present invention allows the surgeon to control the operation of the robotic arm 12 through the input device 20.

Surgical device 14 may be an electrocautery device. Electrocautery devices typically have a bipolar tip which carries a current that heats and denatures tissue. The device is typically coupled to an on-off switch to actuate the device and heat the

tissue. The electrocautery device may also receive control signals to vary its power output. The system 10 of the present invention allows the surgeon to control the operation of the electrocautery device
5 through the input device 20.

Surgical device 16 may be a laser. The laser 16 may be actuated through an on-off switch. Additionally, the power of the laser 16 may be controlled by control signals. The system 10 of the
10 present invention allows the surgeon to control the operation of the laser 16 through the input device 20.

Device 18 may be an operating table. The operating table 18 may contain motors and mechanisms which adjust the position of the table. The present
15 invention allows the surgeon to control the position of the table 18 through the input device 20. Although four surgical devices 12, 14, 16 and 18 are described, it is to be understood that other functions within the operating room may be controlled through the input
20 device 20. By way of example, the system 10 may allow the surgeon to control the lighting and temperature of the operating room through the input device 20.

The input device 20 may be a foot pedal which has a plurality of buttons 22, 24, 26, 28 and 30 that can

be depressed by the surgeon. Each button is typically associated with a specific control command of a surgical device. For example, when the input device 20 is controlling the robotic arm 12, depressing button 22 may move the arm in one direction and depressing button 26 may move the arm in an opposite direction. Likewise, when the electrocautery device 14 or laser 16 are coupled to the input device 20, depressing button 30 may energize the devices, and so forth and so on. Although a foot pedal is shown and described, it is to be understood that the input device 20 may be a hand controller, a speech interface which accepts voice commands from the surgeon, a cantilever pedal or other input devices which may be well known in the art of surgical device control.

The system 10 has a switching interface 40 which couples the input device 20 to the surgical devices 12, 14, 16 and 18. The interface 40 has an input channel 42 which is connected to the input device 20 by bus 44. The interface 40 also has a plurality of output channels 46, 48, 50 and 52 that are coupled to the surgical devices by busses 54, 56, 58, 60, 94, 96, 98 and which may have adapters or controllers disposed in electrical communication therewith and therebetween.

Such adapters and controllers will be discussed in more detail hereinbelow.

Because each device 12, 14, 16, 18 may require specifically configured control signals for proper
5 operation, adapters 90, 92 or a controller 88 may be placed intermediate and in electrical communication with a specific output channel and a specific surgical device. In the case of the robotic arm system 12, no adapter is necessary and as such, the robotic arm
10 system 13 may be in direct connection with a specific output channel. The interface 40 couples the input channel 42 to one of the output channels 46, 48, 50 and 52.

The interface 40 has a select channel 62 which can
15 switch the input channel 42 to a different output channel 46, 48, 50 or 52 so that the input device 20 can control any of the surgical devices. The interface 40 may be a multiplexor circuit constructed as an integrated circuit and placed on an ASIC.
20 Alternatively, the interface 40 may be a plurality of solenoid actuated relays coupled to the select channel by a logic circuit. The interface 40 switches to a specific output channel in response to an input signal or switching signal on the select channel 62.

As depicted in Fig. 1, there may be several inputs to the select channel 62. Such inputs originate from the foot pedal 20, the speech interface 70 and the CPU 72. The interface 40 may have a multiplexing unit such
5 that only one switching signal may be received at the select channel 62 at any one time, thus ensuring no substantial hardware conflicts. The prioritization of the input devices may be configured so the foot pedal has highest priority followed by the voice interface
10 and the CPU. This is intended for example as the prioritization scheme may be employed to ensure the most efficient system. As such other prioritization schemes may be employed. The select channel 62 may sequentially connect the input channel to one of the
15 output channels each time a switching signal is provided to the select channel 62. Alternatively, the select channel 62 may be addressable so that the interface 40 connects the input channel to a specific output channel when an address is provided to the
20 select channel 62. Such addressing is known in the art of electrical switches.

The select channel 62 may be connected by line 64 to a dedicated button 66 on the foot pedal 20. The surgeon can switch surgical devices by depressing the

button 66. Alternatively, the select channel 62 may be coupled by line 68 to a speech interface 70 which allows the surgeon to switch surgical devices with voice commands.

- 5 The system 10 may have a central processing unit (CPU) 72 which receives input signals from the input device 20 through the interface 40 and bus 55. The CPU 72 receives the input signals, and can ensure that no improper commands are being input at the controller.
- 10 If this occurs, the CPU 72 may respond accordingly, either by sending a different switching signal to select channel 62, or by alerting the surgeon via a video monitor or speaker.

- 15 The CPU 72 can also provide output commands for the select channel 62 on bus 76 and receive input commands from the speech interface 70 on the same bi-directional bus 76. The CPU 72 may be coupled to a monitor 80 and/or a speaker 82 by buses 84 and 86, respectively. The monitor 80 may provide a visual
- 20 indication of which surgical device is coupled to the input device 20. The monitor may also provide a menu of commands which can be selected by the surgeon either through the speech interface 70 or button 66. Alternatively, the surgeon could switch to a surgical

device by selecting a command through a graphic user interface. The monitor 80 may also provide information regarding improper control signals sent to a specific surgical device 12, 14, 16, 18 and recognized by the
5 CPU 72. Each device 12, 14, 16, 18 has a specific appropriate operating range, which is well known to the skilled artisan. As such, the CPU 72 may be programmed to recognize when the requested operation from the input device 20 is inappropriate and will then alert
10 the surgeon either visually via the monitor 80 or audibly via the speaker 82. The speaker 82 may also provide an audio indication of which surgical device is coupled to the input device 20.

The system 10 may include a controller 88 which
15 receives the input signals from the input device 20 and provides corresponding output signals to control the operating table 18. Likewise, the system may have adapters 90 and 92 which provide an interface between the input device 20 and the specific surgical
20 instruments connected to the system.

In operation, the interface 40 initially couples the input device 20 to one of the surgical devices. The surgeon can control a different surgical device by generating an input command that is provided to the

select channel 62. The input command switches the interface 40 so that the input device 20 is coupled to a different output channel and corresponding surgical device or adapter. What is thus provided is an
5 interface 40 that allows a surgeon to select, operate and control a plurality of different surgical devices through a common input device 20.

While certain exemplary embodiments have been described and shown in the accompanying drawings, it is
10 to be understood that such embodiments are merely illustrative of and not restrictive on the broad invention, and that this invention not be limited to the specific constructions and arrangements shown and described, since various other modifications may occur
15 to those ordinarily skilled in the art.